

Hillside Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131078
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	315710
Inspection dates	7–8 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ruth Stamper
Headteacher	Mrs Dorothy Smith
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Roberts Lane Hucknall Nottingham NG15 6LW
Telephone number	0115 8401477
Fax number	0115 8401677

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school serving an area of Hucknall near Nottingham. The school opened in January 2007, formed from the amalgamation of two local primary schools. The published data indicates that the catchment contains a variety of contrasting communities, and includes an area of social and economic disadvantage. Pupils enter the school with broadly expected levels of knowledge and understanding but their literacy and mathematical skills are lower. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few are in the early stages of learning English. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved a Healthy School Award, an Activemark and is a 'Change School' working to promote creative partnerships.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where children make good progress and standards are rising. The headteacher has been highly effective in leading the school, enabling one new and united community to emerge from the two distinctive schools that it has grown from. It is apparent on entering the building that the school has at its core an ethos built on 'respect, tolerance and inclusion of the individual'. One parent said: 'I feel the school and children have really worked hard to make one new school. The children especially have settled well and adapted. I am sure this progress is going to continue and the children will reap the rewards.' This view was representative of many who responded to the questionnaire and echoes the views expressed by staff, governors and pupils alike.

Improved facilities support the further development of an already good and rich curriculum. This ensures that pupils enjoy coming to school and that they are keen to learn and work hard. Pupils are offered an array of extra activities in school, at lunch times and after school. These appeal to all interests, extend learning and are highly valued by parents and pupils. As one parent said, 'The school seems to have a very happy buzz about it'. This is in no small part due to the remarkable progress made in the promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being, which is now good. Pupils behave well. Most are considerate, polite, and proud to take on a range of extra responsibilities in ways that make a real difference to life in school. This has come about because all adults are committed to ensuring that pupils are happy, receive good care and guidance and are equipped with the skills that enable them to make the most of the learning opportunities that they are offered, including those with behavioural and emotional needs. Those who find their learning more difficult are also supported to achieve well.

Teachers and teaching assistants have responded well during the period of change and consequently teaching and learning is now good. Many teachers have embraced the opportunity to be more creative and lively in their approach, particularly in the teaching of literacy. Where this is the case, pupils' progress quickens. Leaders recognise that this approach is not evident throughout school and that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning remain, especially in Key Stage 2. Similarly, in the teaching of mathematics, opportunities are sometimes lost to develop pupils' investigative skills and consequently pupil progress slows. Children in the Foundation Stage do well because provision, including teaching, is good.

Good leadership and management has brought rigour to systems for checking on the work of the school and clarity to action planning for improvement which clearly builds on the good work started since the school opened. This, along with the shared enthusiasm for success, demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Most reach levels similar to those expected for their age and some surpass them. They settle quickly into the stimulating environment of the Foundation unit. Adults plan enjoyable activities that engage children and encourage them to work hard. Activities follow themes which give children opportunities to practise what they have learnt in different ways. There is a good balance of teacher led and meaningful child-initiated activities. Satisfactory use is made of the pleasant outside area, but leaders

recognise the need to strengthen the curriculum in order to improve learning. Good teaching ensures good academic progress and is particularly effective in encouraging children to cooperate and talk about their learning. Leaders recognise the need to further develop the rigour of systems to collect information about children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2.
- Improve achievement in mathematics by effectively fostering pupils' investigative skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. From low starting points, they are on target to achieve the standards expected for their age. In Years 3 to 6 progress overall is now good and standards are beginning to rise. However, because of the variation in the quality of teaching in these years, the school's evidence confirms that the progress pupils make varies over time and between subjects. Achievement in English is better than in mathematics, for instance. However, progress is never less than satisfactory, it is mostly good, and in Year 6 it is often exceptional. School leaders have recognised that there is a legacy of underachievement, particularly amongst the oldest pupils and so staff have worked hard to ensure that these pupils make as much progress as possible in order to attain the expected levels in the short time before they leave the school. Pupils who find learning more difficult make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual and cultural development is good. The clear behaviour code developed by staff and pupils, is well known and respected, ensuring behaviour is good. Pupils who find it difficult to get on with others, or deal with their emotions, are well supported and make good improvements. Attendance is average, although the school is working hard to improve this. Many pupils take appropriate physical exercise and eat a healthy school meal, but there are often crisps and chocolate in lunchboxes. Pupils' understanding of healthy eating and how to keep themselves safe is satisfactory. An outstanding feature of this aspect is the extent to which pupils are empowered and have a stake in decision making and the running of the school. They complete applications and are interviewed for being prefects, the 'job squad' and 'playground patrols'. They take their responsibilities seriously and discharge them well. This and their good team-working skills, prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage pupils' differing needs well. They encourage good relationships by employing clear strategies for managing behaviour that lead to calm and purposeful classrooms. This work is helped by the telling contribution of teaching assistants. Teachers' good use of objectives ensures that pupils know what is expected of them. Well-planned opportunities for group or partner work ensures that both the personal and academic needs of pupils are well provided for. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 for example, willingly took on different broadcasting roles to present

and film their findings about life underwater. This typifies the adventurous teaching and learning that the headteacher has promoted. This is not achieved in all classes in Key Stage 2 and is more prevalent in literacy than in other subjects. Teaching and learning in mathematics lacks such imagination and is too wedded to the acquisition of computational skills to the detriment of investigative skills. In literacy, marking gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve their work and is aligned to their targets for learning. This is not always the case in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Good strides have been made in moulding a curriculum that is specifically suited to pupils' needs. Individually tailored programmes which promote pupils' personal development help them to make the most of school. Attempts to make the curriculum more enticing to pupils by using themes and topics which go across subject boundaries have had mixed success and staff are uncertain about how effective this approach is, pointing out that, 'This is still a work in progress'. Nevertheless, the new curriculum has helped to hone pupils' writing skills, although it has not yet raised standards in mathematics. Good use is made of outside expertise. For instance, the Creative Partnership scheme has stimulated pupils' interest in music, and the good range of clubs, especially for sport, has enriched learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's inclusive and supportive ethos is successfully led by the headteacher, and pupils readily acknowledge her influence on the quality of pastoral support they receive, which is very good. All the required checks are carried out on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. There are good systems for checking pupils' progress and those who need additional support are quickly identified. The 'learning den' provides a nurturing environment in which pupils are well supported to help them improve their behaviour. When they are in the den, pupils also make good progress in their reading and writing skills. Pupils find target setting helpful in improving their behaviour, but not all know their academic targets well enough. The quality of marking is variable as there is no policy to guide staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has united staff and governors around a clear vision and strategic direction. Together they have successfully tackled the challenges of amalgamating two distinctive schools and created a new and vibrant community. Governors carry out their roles well and are increasingly able to hold leaders to account. The views of all stakeholders are valued and this is particularly evident in the way pupils demonstrate their ownership of the school. In a relatively short time leaders have shown their good capacity to improve; for example, in the way they have set about tackling underachievement, made improvements to pupils' personal development and raised the quality of teaching and learning in English. Leadership is beginning to be shared out and the capacity of leaders and managers at all levels is developing so that there is no complacency. Leaders are looking forward to ensuring that systems for checking how well pupils are doing in all subjects are as robust as those for English.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hillside Primary and Nursery School, Hucknall, Nottingham, NG15 6LW

We were pleased to meet you and all the staff and very much enjoyed the time we spent with you. Thank you for making us feel so welcome, talking to us and helping us to find out so much about you and your school.

You go to a good school where all the grown-ups do their best for you. They look after you and care for you well. Your teachers and teaching assistants make learning interesting and enjoyable and they work hard to help you make good progress in lessons. The good behaviour of most of you in class, around school and in the playground, helps you to learn well too. It is clear that you are happy at school. Your teachers and your friends help you to feel important and safe there.

The school is keen to find ways to help you do as well as you possibly can. Although you already make good progress whilst you are at the school, we think you could do even better, particularly in mathematics. We would like to see those who lead the school make sure that teaching and learning are always good, and that the teaching of mathematics is as exciting as it is in literacy so that it helps you to get much better at investigating ideas and solving problems.

We are sure that Mrs Smith and all the other staff will continue to do everything they can to help you. You can play your part by continuing to behave well, working really hard and making sure you attend every school day.

We would like to wish you the very best for the future.

Joanne Harvey Lead Inspector